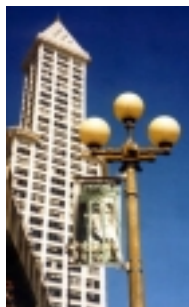


SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOURS

Introduction:

Pioneer Square encompasses the birthplace of modern Seattle and its first downtown. Most of the Square's buildings were erected within a decade of the

disastrous Great Fire of June 6, 1889. The district began a slow decline during World War I and became better known as a derelict and decadent "Skid Road."

Preservationists rallied in the 1960s to save the area's exquisite ensemble of Victorian and Edwardian Era architecture from demolition. Today, Pioneer Square is protected by a 30-acre Historic District and a slightly larger Special Review District. The core of the neighborhood lies between Cherry Street on the north, 2nd Avenue on the east, Alaskan Way on the West, and S King Street on the south.

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To learn more about Pioneer Square's history, visit www.historylink.org.

History

Although Seattle's first permanent settlers landed elsewhere, Pioneer Square can lay claim to being the city's "first neighborhood." Most members of a party led by Arthur Denny relocated from West Seattle's Alki beach to present-day Pioneer Square in the spring of 1852 and set about creating a modern city.

At the time, there was little level (or dry) land on which to build. The area bounded by today's Yesler Way and Main Street and 2nd Avenue and Alaskan Way was a low peninsula, originally called Piner's Point, nearly surrounded by tide flats on the south and east, and bounded by steep ridges to the north.

Pioneer Square Historical Walking Tour

The area south of Yesler Way was claimed by David "Doc" Maynard, a physician and merchant who relocated to Seattle from Olympia at the urging of Chief Seattle. Maynard returned the favor by convincing Seattle's settlers to rename the village, first called "Duwamps," in the Chief's honor. Arthur Denny, Carson Boren, and William Bell staked claims on the ridges to the north and east, but later disagreed with their neighbor over the new town's street grid.

Seattle's early success was guaranteed when Henry Yesler chose the village as the site of Puget Sound's first steam-powered lumber mill (in exchange for generous chunks of the settler's claims). He built his mill on a pier at the foot of today's Yesler Way, once nicknamed "Skid Road."

The village prospered despite a Native American attack in 1856 and various economic downturns. By 1889, Seattle was the state's largest city with 40,000 residents. Then, on June 6, the wood-framed downtown burned to the ground. The city quickly rebuilt -- with brick and stone -- and most of these buildings survive in Pioneer Square.

Following the Klondike Gold Rush, the central business district expanded north of Yesler Way, while landfills and regrades permitted railroad and industrial development south of Pioneer Square. The city's original downtown gradually declined, giving



a new and unsavory meaning to the nickname Skid Road.

Plans for Pioneer Square's "urban renewal" sparked Seattle's historic preservation movement, and a 30-acre district was set aside for protection in May 1969. Restoration and public improvements followed, and the recently demolished Kingdome opened in 1976.

The Square has been buffeted in recent years by earthquakes and rowdy festivals, but it remains largely intact as one of the nation's best preserved Victorian Era downtown districts and as Seattle's first -- and liveliest -- neighborhood.



THE TOUR

1. Pioneer Place, 1st Avenue and Yesler Way:

This odd little triangle is formed by the mismatched intersections along Yesler Way (which we explain a little later). The corner of 1st Avenue and Cherry Street was the site of Yesler's Pavilion, an early social and entertainment center, and the triangle was dedicated as a park in the late 1800s. Because this area so densely packed with historical and architectural features, we will discuss each in turn.



1A. Pioneer Place Totem Pole: In 1899, some of the town's leading citizens added a totem pole, which they had stolen from a Tlingit village while returning from a "goodwill cruise" to Alaska. The original was badly scorched by an arsonist in



1938, and legend has it that when the city tried to buy a new pole, the Tlingits cashed the check and thanked Seattle for "paying for the first one."

Actually, the U.S. Forest Service underwrote the replacement pole, which was carved -- for a fee -- by native craftsmen Charles and William Brown.

1B. Pioneer Place Pergola: The triangle became a de facto transit stop for passengers taking the streetcars and cable cars that clattered along 1st Avenue and Yesler Way. In anticipation of Seattle's first World's Fair, the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909, the city added an underground "comfort station" topped by an ornate Pergola. The nearby fountain with James Wehn's bust of Chief Seattle was also dates back to 1909.

The Pergola and park (but not the restrooms) were restored in 1973 thanks

to a gift from the Casey Foundation. The shelter was toppled by a wayward truck in January 2001 but should be repaired by Christmas, 2001.

1C. Pioneer Building and Neighbors: The buildings fronting Pioneer Place are among the finest in the Square. The Pioneer Building was completed in 1892 and designed by Elmer Fisher, who was responsible for numerous other post-fire structures. It lost its original central tower in the 1949 earthquake, but the rest of the building was lovingly restored under the direction of architect Ralph Anderson in 1975.

The adjacent Howard and Lowman Hanford Buildings date from 1890 and 1899 respectively. The newer Lowman Building on Cherry Street was designed by Emil DeNeuf and Augustus Heide and opened in 1900.

1D. Underground Seattle Tour: The Doc Maynard Saloon is home base for the famous Underground Seattle Tour, established in 1964 by the late journalist and author Bill Speidel. The guided excursion features lively commentaries and descents into Pioneer Square's subterranean labyrinth of cellars and sealed-over sidewalk passageways.

The latter dates back to post-fire reconstruction, when city engineers decided to raise Pioneer Square's streets a full story. Since many buildings were already under construction, architects provided for two "ground floors," the lower of which would ultimately disappear beneath new sidewalks. Merchants on this level tried to survive via skylights and stairways, but most soon failed and access to their businesses was paved over.

Speidel's rediscovery of these lost catacombs helped to promote public support for Pioneer Square's preservation in the 1960s, and they have been a must-do tourist attraction for nearly 40 years. One caveat: Bill never let a fact spoil a



good story, so take a grain of salt along as you happily go urban spelunking.

2. Yesler Way: This street was created to serve Henry Yesler's sawmill on Elliott Bay, and was therefore originally called Mill Street. Legend has it that logs were once dragged down it from First Hill, giving it the nickname "Skid Road," although there is little hard evidence of such activity.

Early in Seattle's history, Yesler Way became a moral divide separating a southern vice district of saloons and brothels from "respectable" areas on the north. The Rev. Mark Matthews, a crusading reformer and prohibitionist, popularized the phrase Skid Road in the 1920s to dramatize the sinful ways and traps south of Yesler.

Yesler Way also divided the pioneer claims of Arthur Denny and Carson Boren on the north and David "Doc" Maynard on the south. When Denny and Maynard sat down to draw up the first plats for Seattle in May 1853, they could not agree on the orientation of the street grid. Denny later grumbled that Maynard, "stimulated with liquor," had decided he was "not only monarch of all he surveyed, but of what Boren and I surveyed, too." Their spat survives in the tangled intersections along Yesler Way.

3. Corner of Yesler Way and 1st Avenue S:

The dark stone Yesler Building on the southwest corner was designed by Elmer Fisher and completed in 1890. President Benjamin Harrison addressed Seattle from its balcony a year later. The building stands on the site of Yesler's Hall, Seattle's first social center.

The northwest corner was originally occupied by the cookhouse for Yesler's Mill, built in 1852. It is now filled by the Mutual Life Building, begun by Elmer Fisher in 1890 and completed by Robert L. Robertson and James E. Blackwell seven years later.

The newer building on the southeast corner was built in 1985 to replace the original Olympic Block, which collapsed during restoration in 1972.

4. West Side of the 100 Block of 1st Avenue S:

The west side of the street features several significant buildings, beginning with the Schwabacher, designed by the ubiquitous Elmer Fisher and completed in 1890. Under the direction of Bailey

Gatzert, Seattle's first and, to date, only Jewish mayor, the Schwabacher later became a major outfitter to Klondike Gold Rush prospectors. Many of these "sour-doughs" also found lodging at the adjacent Northern Hotel (architect Charles W. Saunders, completed 1889). The south end of the block is anchored by the elegant Maynard Building, designed by Albert Wickersham and completed in 1892. It stands on the site of Seattle's first bank, a safe owned by Dexter Horton, who went on to found Seattle First National Bank (since assimilated by the Bank of America).

5. East Side of the 100 Block of 1st Avenue S:

Immediately south of the Olympic Block stands the Lippy (E. W. Houghton, 1902). Its southern neighbor, the City Club, was originally built in 1897 and gained an ornate Art Nouveau facade in 1905 befitting the gentlemen's club and restaurant it once housed. The rest of the block is lined by the Delmar Building, which was later renamed the State Hotel. It actually began as two buildings, the Terry and Kittinger, which were designed with coordinated facades by Herman Steinmann in 1889.

6. Side Trip West on S Washington Street:

A side trip west on S Washington Street will take you past the former St. Charles Hotel (1889) and the Washington Park Building (1890). Washington Street was once the terminus of a West Seattle streetcar line that snaked across the mouth of the Duwamish on a trestle.

Alaskan Way was created in the 1930s to replace the wooden-planked Railroad Avenue that once ran the length of the waterfront. The Alaskan Way Viaduct was completed in 1954 and remains a controversial addition to the waterfront, especially since recent earthquakes. The Waterfront Streetcar was added in 1982.

Washington Street terminates at a boat landing. The iron shelter was designed by D.R. Huntington and built in 1920 to house the Seattle Harbor Master. A private philanthropy, the all-women Committee of 33, funded its restoration in the mid-1970s.

7. West Side of the 200 Block of 1st Avenue S:

The J & M Cafe has occupied the southwest corner of 1st and Washington since the Klondike Gold Rush. It and the nearby Central Tavern ("Seattle's Only Second Class Tavern") were among the leading businesses in the Square's mid-1970s rebirth.

The west side of the block is anchored by the New England Hotel (1889) and marks the 1852 site of Doc Maynard's first home and Seattle's second log cabin.

8. East Side of the 200 Block of 1st Avenue S:

The building on southeast corner of 1st and Washington lost most of its character due to crude repairs after the 1949 earthquake. The adjacent City Loan building was home to a long-time pawn shop and then a restaurant founded by gastronomic legends Francois and Julia Kissel.

The balance of the block is faced by the Grand Central on the Park. Remodeled in 1971 by Ralph Anderson, Richard White, and Alan Black, the Grand Central encompasses the former Squire and Latimer Buildings dating from 1889. The southern Squire occupies the 1879 site of

Watson C. Squire's Opera House, Seattle's first formal theater. The Grand Central's arcade contains numerous shops and eateries and opens on to Occidental Park on the east.

9. Side Trip East on S Main Street: A brief detour on the south side of S Main will lead you to the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park. This delightful museum is part of a complex of sister attractions located in Skagway, Alaska, and Dawson and Whitehorse in Canada's Yukon.

Also note the platform for the Waterfront Streetcar, which was extended eastward on Main to the International District in 1990.



10. West Side of the 300 Block of 1st Avenue S: The Bread of Life Mission occupies the Matilda Winehill Block, a former hotel, on the southwest corner of 1st and Main. This was the original site of Doc Maynard's 1852 "Seattle Exchange"

general store. The nearby Squire and Maud buildings were built in 1890.

Seattle's famous Elliott Bay Book Company and Cafe fills the ground floor and basement of the former Globe Hotel, designed by William E. Boone in 1890. This corner was the site of Seattle's first hospital, run by Doc Maynard. The street clock was relocated to this spot in 1984.

Continuing south leads you past the Nord Hotel (1890), Seattle Quilt Building (1904), and Jackson Building (1901), site of the former Capitol Brewing Company. Ralph Anderson guided the building's restoration in 1963, making it the first among the Square's structures to be reborn.

11. Southwest Corner of S Jackson Street and 1st Avenue S:

This corner marks the original site of the Felker House, the first Seattle building using milled lumber. The two-story framed structure was built by a sea captain and managed as a hotel, restaurant, and brothel by Mary Conklin, a tart-tongued Irishwoman who earned the nickname "Mother (later Madame) Damnable." It is now occupied by the handsome Pacific Marine Schwabacher Building, designed by Charles Bebb and Carl Gould in 1905. A short walk west on Jackson will bring you to the Pioneer Square Post Office and a small museum documenting the Postal Service's early history.

The Schwabacher's southern neighbor, Merrill Place, incorporates a 1984 remodel of the Seller and Hambrack buildings. The diminutive Triangle Hotel (C.A. Breitung, 1910), which once billed itself as the West Coast's smallest hostelry, stands a few blocks farther south on 1st.

12. East on S Jackson Street:

Strolling east on Jackson takes you past the Fisher Building, built in 1900 and remodeled with an Art Deco facade in 1928. The



vista south at S Occidental was once filled by the Kingdome, built in 1976 for football, baseball, and other indoor entertainments. It was imploded in 2000 to make room for Paul Allen's new Seahawk's Stadium. A new exhibition center and the Seattle Mariner's new home, Safeco Field, stand farther south along Occidental.

This entire area was once a vast tide flat. It was later filled for new development and railyards. A short walk east will lead you to the King Street Station, designed for the Great Northern Railway and Northern Pacific Railroad and now terminus for Amtrak. The building and its campanile were completed in 1906 and designed by Charles A. Reed and Allen H. Stem, famed for New York City's Central Station.

The slightly younger Union Station stands a block east. It was built for the Oregon &



Washington Railroad, a unit of Union Pacific, and the Milwaukee Road in 1911. The building and its vaulted Great Hall were designed by Daniel J. Patterson and remodeled in 1999 as the new home of the regional Sound Transit system.

13. Returning North on S Occidental :

Occidental was repaved and landscaped as a pedestrian mall in 1972. Most of the buildings lining it date from Seattle's reconstruction in the 1890s. The State Building on the southeast corner of Occidental and S Main Street (Elmer Fisher, 1890) stands on the site of a blockhouse in which settlers took shelter during an attack by Salish warriors on January 26, 1856. The raiders were repulsed by Marines and cannon fire from the U.S.S. Decatur anchored in Elliott Bay, and Chief Leschi was later hanged (unjustly in the opinion of many) for his role in the Indian rebellions of 1855-1856.

A short walk east on S Main will lead you past the 1929 headquarters of the Seattle Fire Department on the south and Waterfall Garden on the north. The latter is a privately maintained oasis designed

by Masao Kinoshita and built by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 1977 to mark the birthplace of today's United Parcel Service. UPS co-founder James Casey got his start in 1907 serving a clientele largely made up of Pioneer Square's numerous saloons and bordellos.

14. Occidental Park: This cobblestone expanse and its incongruously modernistic pergola were built in 1972. The nearby totems were all carved by Duane Pasco and donated by gallery owner Richard White in the late 1980s. The taller totem relates how a raven once stole the moon, and the other depicts a man riding the tail of a whale. The facing pair of large figures represents mythological dream dwellers, the fearsome Tsonogua on the west and a bear on the east, which were invoked by North Coast Salish mothers to threaten disobedient children.

15. Side Trip East on S Washington Street: A short walk east on S Washington leads you to the site of Seattle's original Chinatown. Note the ornate upper balcony of the building on the northeast corner of Washington and the 2nd Avenue Extension. This once housed a family association, or tong, and the Wah Chong Company, which supplied Chinese immigrant labor for early railroad and city construction projects. An economic downturn in the mid-1880s fueled white resentment of Chinese workers, and most of Seattle's 300 Chinese residents were forced to leave Seattle at gunpoint in February 1886.

Seattle's first Catholic church, Our Lady of Good Hope, once stood a little farther east, on the corner of 3rd Avenue S and S Washington Street. The neighboring Washington Court Building (1890) once housed Madam Lou Graham's whorehouse, giving visitors the choice between "piety and prostitution on the same corner," as one pioneer quipped.

16. Occidental at Yesler Way: The imposing Interurban Building was designed by John Parkinson and built in 1890 as the northern terminus of the region's first electric interurban railway, which linked Seattle, Georgetown, and, later, Tacoma.

The hideous "sinking ship" garage was built in 1962. It replaced the stately



Seattle Hotel, which was erected on the site after the original Occidental Hotel perished in the 1889 fire. The hotel's demolition sparked the citizen's campaign that led to creation of the Pioneer Square Historic District in 1969, so it did not die in vain.

17. Smith Tower: The 42-story Smith Tower was designed by Gaggin & Gaggin for typewriter magnate L.C. Smith, and reigned as the tallest structure west of the Mississippi until completion of the Space Needle in 1962. The Smith Tower's opening on July 4, 1914, truly marked the high point in Pioneer Square's early development, and also the beginning of a long decline as downtown's main business offices and retailers began to migrate north.



Rehabilitation of the Smith Tower and its gleaming terra cotta cladding, brass-caged elevators (with attendants), and sumptuous Chinese Room observation level was launched in the mid-1980s by the late restaurateur Ivar Haglund. The building is now owned by the SAMIS Foundation, formed to manage the estate of long-time Pioneer Square landlord Sam Israel, and is in the midst of a major renovation.

Nearby stands an entrance to the King County Metro Transit Tunnel, completed in 1990 between the State Trade & Convention Center on the north and the International District on the south. During excavation of the Pioneer Square station, workers uncovered one of the giant wheels that once guided cable cars up and down Yesler Way between the Square and Leschi Park on the shore of Lake Washington.

A short walk west on Yesler Way will return you to Pioneer Place and complete this little tour. We've only touched on a few of the neighborhood's historical and cultural attractions and encourage you to explore further on your own.